

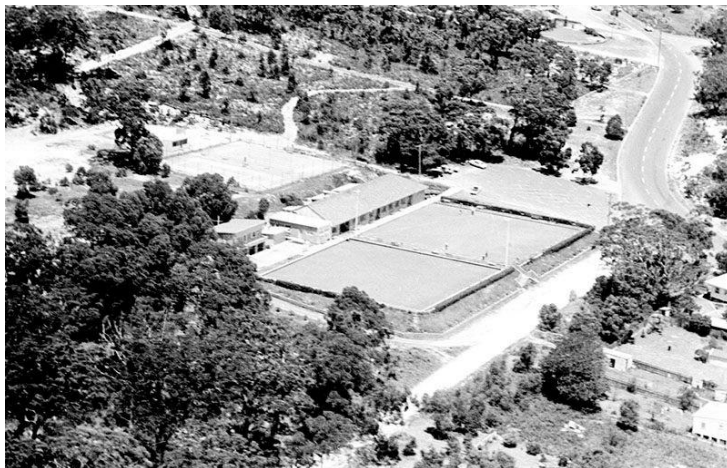


THE HISTORY OF THE NELSON BAY TENNIS CLUB

The Nelson Bay Tennis Club is one of the oldest existing sporting bodies in the local area and took up residency on its present site behind the Bowling Club in 1956 with the facility of two clay courts.

Prior to 1956, the Club conducted its activities on courts in the Apex Park opposite the Seabreeze Hotel and further used a privately owned court of Mr L Simmonds in Donald Street (now Shoey's carpark) for night tennis.

A Works Committee, elected in 1957 consisting of Messrs G Bernard, S Davis, K Sproule, G Samson and A Bagnall, undertook to improve the playing surface for competition purposes and erect a Club shed. Finances for this operation were derived from social functions, cake stalls, fashion parades and the like and was necessary to accommodate the entry of four teams in the Port Stephens Tennis Association Saturday afternoon competition.



An additional two teams were fielded and entered in the competition in 1958 and Mr Simmonds' court was acquired to facilitate the increase in participants.

In the immediate ensuing years, membership continued to escalate under the guidance of names such as Bernard, Samson, Fine and Bagnall.

The mid-sixties was a prominent era for the Club with the

construction of a third court and the lighting of the two existing courts in an attempt to facilitate the ever increasing tennis fraternity requirements in the local area.

During this period and more particularly in 1966, we saw an almost complete change of office bearers and the posting of Doug Bagnall to the Treasurer's position to join his father's and mother's prominent positions in the Club. Arthur continued on as a maintenance contractor, his wife Flo conducting hiring and bookings and Doug is in his 17th term as Treasurer.

In the early seventies, membership surpassed the 100 mark and with financial assistance from the Council, the present amenities block was constructed and lighting erected on the third court. By now, maintaining the gravel courts at competition standard was proving to be a lengthy, time consuming and costly service which culminated when in 1974 the surface was altered to an all-weather composition.

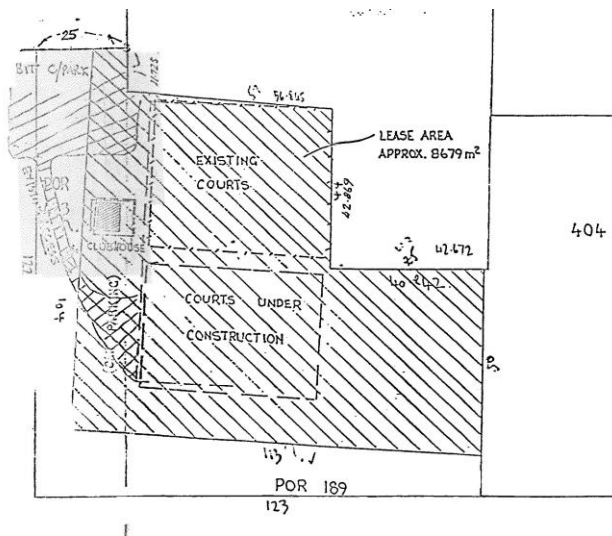
Once again, the Club gained financial support from the Council for these projects, with the Club supplying enormous honorary support with the labour. By this time, it was evident that the present lighting was not up to standard for competition and therefore, a new floodlighting system was installed to amend the position at considerable cost with this project being finalised in 1978.

1978 proved to be a very important year for the Club with a serious move into the nurturing of junior tennis. Under the guidance of initial coaches Carolyn Affleck and Bruce Scott, over 80 children were partaking in tennis activities in the first year, which resulted in a successful Saturday morning junior competition

Over the next couple of years, without any interest waning in the junior tennis ranks, the overall membership increased to 160 members with the Club fielding 23 teams in Saturday and Thursday Ladies Competition, the Club was again in a position of not being able to accommodate the influx and was borrowing other courts in the area for home matches.

When the 1980's arrived, negotiations began to arrest this problem by approaching Council to extend the lease with the view of building additional courts. After lengthy discussions and costing, the Club was given the go ahead by both the Council and its own members approval to begin clearing land for the construction of three new synthetic grass courts.

These courts were constructed by the club membership under the guidance of then Club President Barry Pugh. They were the first synthetic grass courts in Port Stephens.



14 months and \$52,000 later the new courts were playable with the help of grants of \$10,000 from the Department of Sport and Tourism and \$8,000 from the Council. The balance of funding was via Club funds and two repayable loans.

Prior to the appointment of a full-time professional coach, the club coaching program was managed by Maurie Childs and Bruce Scott on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings starting at 7am and finishing at 11am with time to play Saturday afternoon competition.

This included the running of the Newcombe and Roche Custom Credit Operations Tennis Junior coaching program on a regional facility.

1985 saw the appointment of the Club's first full time Tennis Professional just back from the USA, Gary Ludlow. Unfortunately, Gary only last 2 years and moved back to USA.

In 1987 the club engaged the services of a Professional coach Keith Williams, who remained at the club until 1998, when he took a position as head coach at Newcastle's District Park Tennis Centre. During this period the club entered teams into the Newcastle District winter team's competition which accommodated 14 divisions of men's teams and 12 divisions of ladies' teams.

The Club was successful in winning four (4) A grade men's premierships over this period. The Club continued to field teams in division 1 and division 2 Newcastle Winter competitions until 2010.

1995 saw the Nelson Bay Complex now with eight synthetic grass courts, after the construction of courts 7 and 8 in 1988, in 1990, a worthy investment to accommodate the large night competitions and the Club's Nelson Bay Open tournament attracting up to 400 players from around NSW. The Club had to also use all the Tomaree Peninsular Tennis Club facilities including the Roche Racquet resorts 6 courts.

This tournament operated for 8 years until changing the format to the current Seniors Tournament. Sourcing sponsorship was one of the major courses of the change, not helped by the June long weekend weather.

The Club now has a membership of over 250, including approximately 100 juniors under the Club coach, Mr Keith Williams. The Club also conducted the Club Championships which ran over two weekends to cater for all the players.

In 1992 the club appoints John Eastburn as the club coach for the next 10 years. The Committee under advice from John Eastburn who had built and operated the Palms

Tennis Centre in Sydney, before moving to Nelson Bay, takes over the management of the Pro-Shop employing Bruce Hyland until his illness and later Adrian Everitt, which remained in place until 2005. In 1998 the membership grew to 380 players.

In 2003 the original courts 1-3 had to be reconstructed at a cost of 300K due to the Nelson Bay Bowling Club retaining wall caving into the Bowling Club cool rooms and taking half of court 3 surface with it. Contributions came from the Port Stephens Council, Bowling Club and Nelson Bay Tennis Club, to take the opportunity to re-grass, install new lighting and intermediate fences between courts.

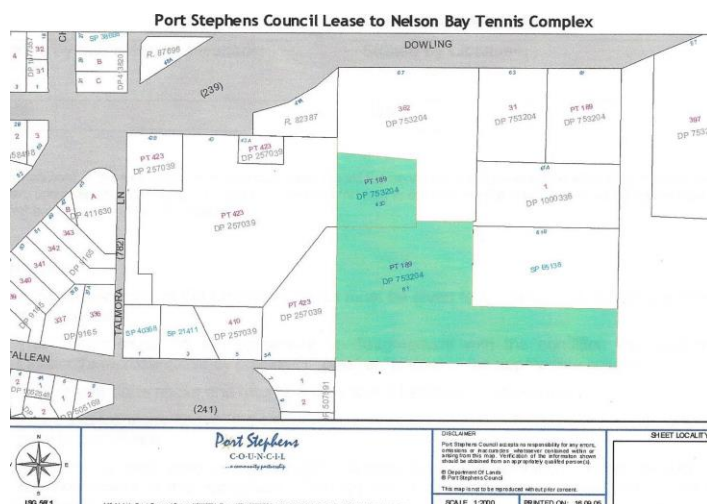
In 2005 Jason and Anne Hogden signed a Management Agreement for 9 years to manage the complex which was terminated in December 2008.

In 2009 Peter Doohan was appointed Club Coach/Manager on a similar management agreement for 9 years. Peter had just returned from USA and through his relationship with Club President Bruce Scott accepted the position, turning down an offer from Cessnock TC.

Club competitions continued to be organised on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday nights in two divisions using all eight courts, and Saturday afternoons.

Port Stephens Tennis Association also conducted the ever-popular Thursday Ladies teams' competition with the Club fielding around 12 teams.

The Club had also developed a strong veteran's group who meet on the third Sunday of each month with around 20 - 30 players attending. This eventually grew to every Sunday afternoon.



The Club developed strong links with the area's Resorts, offering the complex and services to support their needs.

The Club was able to maintain just over 250 members, and had ample facilities to accommodate its members, public and tourists alike in the immediate future, and a complex which the members and Shire can be proud.

In 2020, the Club, under current contracted Club Coach/Manager Blake Dennison, has a membership of just on 200 senior

and juniors' players, and is looking at again, growing the membership.

The Club continues to operate Monday and Tuesday night competitions, and a Thursday Ladies competition with reduced player numbers.

The senior's social tennis is strong with tennis available 4 days a week, while Saturday afternoon tennis is still operating for the competition level players.



The Club continues to successfully run a TNSW Seniors tournament which has run for over 12 years, with a consistent 120 players coming to the area in the November period.

In May 2020 the club with the support of Port Stephens Council upgraded the 44 Metal Halide light fittings with new LED's, with an average output of 500 Lux. The first PSC Tennis Club to go full LED, reducing operating costs and enabling older players with eye sight problems to again play night tennis.



In July 2021 Port Stephens Council carried out an asset rehabilitation program valued at \$200K on the original three courts replacing all the retaining walls and fences originally constructed by the club members in the mid 1960's.

Bruce Scott

8/11/2021